

BILL BRIGHT WINS TEMPLETON PRIZE

March 23, 1996 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -

On March 6 the announcement was made that Bill Bright, head of Campus Crusade for Christ, was named winner of the \$1 million Temple Prize for Progress in Religion. The award is scheduled to be given on May 8 at a private ceremony at Buckingham Palace. A public ceremony will follow on May 9 at a Catholic church dedicated to Mary--the Church of Santa Maria near Rome.

"Campus Crusade for Christ moved from San Bernardino, Calif., to Orlando [Florida] in 1991. About

800 of the organization's nearly 13,000 full-time employees work at a temporary headquarters near Orlando International Airport. Planning is under way for a permanent, \$56.1 million World Center for Discipleship and Evangelism on Lake Hart, east of Orlando International Airport. Campus Crusade, which is nondenominational, has an annual budget of \$270 million," (Orlando Sentinel, March 6, 1996).

"I am deeply humbled and greatly honored to receive the Templeton Prize," said Bright, in an interview at Campus Crusade for Christ headquarters in Orlando. "Because it deals with the basic issue of life, man's relationship with God, and as a result, man's relationship with man."

The Templeton Prize was established in 1972 by wealthy businessman John Templeton. It is awarded to a person "who has shown extraordinary originality in advancing humankind's understanding of God and/or spirituality."

This is the third time the award has been given to men who profess to be Evangelical Christians. Billy Graham won the award in 1982, and Charles Colson, in 1993.

The Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion never honors those who are standing uncompromisingly for the Faith once delivered to the saints. It awards apostasy, paganism, and ecumenism. Mother Teresa won the first Templeton Prize in 1973. Catholic Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens was awarded the prize in 1976. The founder of the world's largest Buddhist lay organization, Nikkyo Niwano, was the 1979 winner. The 1985 Templeton Prize went to marine biologist Alister Hardy, who believes religion is an advantage in the evolutionary survival of the human species. Modernist James McCord, retired president of Princeton Seminary, received the prize in 1986. In 1987 the winner was Dr. Stanley Jaki, a Roman Catholic priest who was cited for his attempts to bridge the gap between faith and religion. Other winners have included Unitarian Ralph Burhoe; the Dalai Lama; pacifist United States senator Mark Hatfield; Dr. Inamullah Khan, secretary-general of the World Muslim Congress; Chiara Lubich, the Italian Roman Catholic who founded the Focolare Movement; and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, former president of India, who was awarded for his contribution to Hinduism.

John M. Templeton, who established the Templeton Prize, is a trustee of the American Bible Society. He was awarded the Norman Vincent Peale Award for Positive Thinking in 1992.

It does not surprise us that Billy Graham, Bill Bright, and Charles Colson have been awarded the Templeton Prize. These men have been at the forefront of breaking down the walls of biblical separation and building an ecumenical one-world church. All three men have been supportive of Pope John Paul II, have accepted Roman Catholicism as a genuine expression of biblical Christianity, and have promoted unity between Catholics and non-Catholics. Just five months ago, in October 1995, Bill Bright joined other Evangelical and Charismatic leaders to meet with the Pope in New York City. Charles Colson was there, as was Pat Robertson of the 700 Club and Don Argue, President of the National Association of Evangelicals..

This is blindness and apostasy. God forbids His people from making common cause with heresy. The Great Commission prohibits modern-day ecumenism. The Great Commission commands us to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. We cannot, therefore, hold hands with those who preach false gospels. The Great Commission commands us to baptize our converts, so we cannot fellowship with those who baptize according to manufactured traditions. The Great Commission commands that we build sound churches and instruct in all the counsel of God. How, then, can we countenance those who build churches patterned after man's traditions and who are giving false instruction?

Sadly, Bill Bright illustrates the doctrinally careless and spiritually undiscerning condition of evangelical Christianity in these last days.

PRAYER AND FASTING

Bright said he plans to use the money from the award to "teach pastors and laymen and women, students of the world, the importance of fasting with prayer as it relates to fulfilling the Great Commission." He said, "I feel that fasting with prayer is the most powerful discipline of the Christian life." In 1994 and 1995 Bright undertook two 40-day fasts. In 1995 he brought together more than 4,000 Christian leaders in Los Angeles, California, and in Orlando, Florida, to fast and pray for spiritual revival. Bright has also published a book called *The Coming Revival: America's Call to Fast, Pray, and 'Seek God's Face'.*

We agree with Bright about the importance of prayer and fasting, but obedience to the Bible is even more important than fasting. The Bible commands God's people to mark and avoid those who teach error (Romans 16:17). It says those who preach false gospels are cursed (Galatians 1). Bill Bright ignores these warnings for the sake of a positive approach to the ministry. Instead of separating from those who preach false gospels and who add to the grace of Jesus Christ, Bright receives them as brethren and works with them in "preaching the gospel." What gospel does Rome stand for? The New Catholic Catechism, the most up-to-date statement of Catholic doctrine, says, "By Baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all

punishment for sin" (1263). What Gospel do the apostate World Council of Churches denominations stand for? The majority of preachers in these denominations are modernists of various sorts. The modernist doesn't believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God. He doesn't believe the record of the Fall in Genesis 3 is true history. He doesn't believe Jesus' blood provides full atonement from sin. He preaches reformation and social change rather than regeneration. Yet Bright joins hands with such men. In fact, Bright is a member of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the most liberal of Presbyterian groups. Even Bright's gospel presentation is designed to be positive in its approach. Instead of starting with man's sin and God's holiness and justice, as the Bible does, Bright's Four Spiritual Laws begins with "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." It is true that God loves all men but it is not true that God has a wonderful plan for the life of an unbeliever. God's plan for the unsaved is eternal Hell, unless they are born again through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

In describing his method of evangelism Bright said, "If they're Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, whomever, we don't ever try to put down other religions. We simply proclaim the truth as we know it." This sounds right to our self-esteem mad generation, but it is not scriptural. Biblically, it is impossible to preach the truth without preaching against error. The prophets and apostles did not merely preach the truth; they preached against idolatry and apostasy. That is why they were so hated.

The world applauds New evangelicalism's positive approach to Christianity, but it still hates the truth when it is preached in a biblical fashion.

"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26).

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19).